

Let me close, Mr. Speaker. I am a great believer in free speech. I often am one of only two or three Members voting against telling people they can't read this or say that or look at such and such on the Internet. If I was inclined to ban forms of expression, it wouldn't have much to do with sex. I would make it a misdemeanor to use pragmatism and idealism as if they were opposing views. And that's what we have here. People say, well, you're going to be pragmatic and pass a bill that protects millions of people against discrimination based on sexual orientation, but, me, I am an idealist. I am for no bill at all because if I can't protect everybody, I don't want to protect anybody.

Let me put it to you this way, Mr. Speaker: of course you should start with ideals. You don't belong in this line of work making rules that other people have to abide by unless you are motivated by a genuine idealism about how the world should be. But the more committed you are to your ideals, the more you are morally obligated to be pragmatic about achieving them. What good are your ideals if they're never achieved and all they do is make you feel pure?

If we kill the gay rights bill this year and set back for some time to come the possibility of going after any of these forms of discrimination, there will be people who will be very proud of themselves. See, I didn't let those politicians compromise. I didn't let those politicians settle not for half a loaf but for about 85, 90 percent of a loaf. I insisted on absolute solidarity and absolute purity, and I feel much better about it.

And they probably will. But millions of people will be worse off because they will have been denied by this preference for purity a real legal protection.

Mr. Speaker, I filed a bill in 1972, in December, and my former colleague Jim Segel here who was with me as one of the few supporters of that, and we pushed for that. My colleague, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), was one as well. We pushed for that. For 35 years I have been trying very hard to protect people against discrimination, and the people who are the victims of discrimination, they tend to be the most vulnerable people in places where there is the most hostility. And we are on the verge of winning in the House of Representatives an extraordinary historic victory, the passage of a bill banning discrimination based on sexual orientation. And people say don't do that because you can't protect everybody.

I should add, Mr. Speaker, I talk a lot to gay people, gay men and lesbians. I find the view that we should not do anything until we can do everything very much in the minority. I understand the passion of those who are in organizational positions. But, you know, we talk about politics here. There are politics in organizations too.

There are people who I have privately discussed this with who have said, yes, we wish you would go ahead, but I can't say that. I can't stand up against this organizational consensus.

Well, idealism by itself is going to be pretty fruitless, and idealism that is empowered by pragmatism is the way in which we make progress, and that is what we are called upon to do here. And so I am asking my colleagues, Democratic and Republican because there is bipartisan support for this, please do not be dissuaded by those who say do nothing until you can do everything. Look at the history of civil rights. Look at the fact that we helped one group here, we dealt with a certain form of discrimination there.

Even here, by the way, we are talking about employment discrimination. We are not talking about marriage here. There was an effort to try to put civil unions and partner benefits in the bill. It was a mistake. We'd get rid of it or it would kill the whole bill.

I do not believe that the majority of gay men and lesbians in this country want to take the position that nothing shall be done to enhance legal protection against the prejudice from which they suffer until we can do the job perfectly. I also believe that from the standpoint of including people who are transgender, for which I have and will continue to work, we will not accomplish that nearly as quickly. Maybe in 50 years it will all get done. I'll be dead; so tell me anything. I won't be able to argue with you.

But in the interim, we will get there much more quickly if we continue to follow the sensible strategy of working with allies, of accepting support that is overwhelming but not complete, of understanding political reality, of moving forward, of alleviating some fears by taking some partial steps. We are a lot likelier to get there.

So we have two choices today: we can say until we are able to do everything, we are going to abandon this effort; and I believe the consequences of that will be profoundly negative for any effort to revive this. People will say, wait a minute, those are the people who tell me not to do that. God knows what they're going to ask me for the next time. For 30 years they told me they wanted this. Now when I want to give them this, no, that's not good enough. They want that. I can't go through this again.

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Or, we can take one of the biggest steps forward in the anti-discrimination march, in the march to make the American Constitution's wonderful principles fully applicable with everybody, we can take a major step forward on that issue. And having done that, we will be, in my judgment, better able to take the next step. That is the choice. And I hope, both for the substance, and for giving people a lesson in responsible governance in defense and in advancement of our values, my col-

leagues, especially on this side, but in the whole House, will opt for sensible and real progress that serves the interests of the majority and rejects the counsel of those who say that, absent perfection, we should leave everything as it was.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Ms. BEAN (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today and October 10.

Ms. BORDALLO (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today and until 3 p.m. on October 10 on account of official business in the district.

Mr. HODES (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today on account of travel problems.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today and October 10 on account of a family emergency.

Mr. GARY G. MILLER of California (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today and October 10 on account of illness.

Mr. REICHERT (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today and October 10 on account of personal reasons.

Mr. WAMP (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of a family commitment.

Mr. GINGREY (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of attending a funeral.

Mr. KNOLLENBERG (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. LUCAS (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of family health reasons.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. WOOLSEY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CUMMINGS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MEEK of Florida, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. FOXX) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, October 15 and 16.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today and October 10.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, October 15 and 16.

Ms. FOXX, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at their own request) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. KAGEN, for 5 minutes, today.